



601 E Street, NW | Washington, DC 20049
202-434-2277 | 1-888-OUR-AARP | 1-888-687-2277 | TTY: 1-877-434-7598
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March 17, 2015

The Honorable Mike Shirkey
& members of the Senate Health Policy Committee
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Senator Shirkey and Committee Members,

As the Director of Advocacy and Consumer Affairs for the Center to Champion Nursing in America at the AARP Public Policy Institute, I would like to express my appreciation for the hearing you are having on Senate Bill 68.

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a strong appeal to policy leaders to make policy changes so that all Americans can have access to all of our nation's highly skilled clinicians. Senate Bill 68 represents one of the policy changes recommended by the IOM that AARP strongly supports. The Institute of Medicine based its recommendations on decades of data that show that advanced practice registered nurses provide as high quality care as their physician counterparts. It also recognized and responded to demographic changes including the aging of the population and decreased rate of physicians going into primary care.

Even prior to the Institute of Medicine's report, AARP has actively supported policies that improve consumers' access to primary care. We do so because we want to make sure that individuals living in rural areas, such as Michigan's Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Michigan, can obtain quick access to a high quality primary care clinician, such as a nurse practitioner. Being able to see a clinician at the right time allows a person to continue to work and thrive. When an individual's care is delayed, he or she can face unnecessary discomfort, the need to travel long distances to see another clinician, additional lost time at work, or even an avoidable hospitalization.

This scenario is very realistic in Michigan. As you know, nearly 20 percent of Michiganders live in rural areas. Yet, according to the National Rural Health Association, less than 10 percent of Michigan physicians practice there. Michigan's seniors and families who live in

Real Possibilities

rural communities need and deserve timely access to a clinician when they are injured, or take ill, or are otherwise hindered from being able to do the jobs they love to do.

These delays in care would also cost these hard working people, and their insurers - including Medicaid, more money. It is significantly more expensive to go to the hospital than it is a clinician's office. Passage of Senate Bill 68 would be an important step forward to improving health care access in Michigan.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share this information with the committee. If you have any questions or if there is further information I can provide, please feel free to contact me at (202) 434-3956 or wquinn@aarpp.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'W. Quinn', with a stylized, flowing script.

Winifred Quinn
Director, Advocacy and Consumer Affairs